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Old Florence and Modern Tuscany. By Janet Ross. E. B. Dutton & Co. 1904.

Mrs. Ross's volume on Florentine themes, ancient and modern, is full of varied interest. Some of these essays have seen the light in English magazines, but well deserve being collected into book form on account of their historical research and of their keen observation of actual conditions of peasant life in Tuscany. She begins with the history of the Misericordia, the confraternity of Pity. Visitors at Florence cannot fail to have been impressed by coming across a weird company of black enshrouded forms carrying a catafalque in the streets and in the lanes outside the city, hurrying along on some mission of mercy. There is a tradition that, in 1240, at the time Florence supplied cloth to foreign countries, many porters were employed carrying bales between the weavers and the dyers, and afterwards to the warehouses of the merchants. These porters had a refuge against wind and weather in certain cellars belonging to the Adimari in the Piazza del Duomo. One of their number, Piero Borsi, a devout man, shocked at their constant cursing and swearing, proposed that whoever took the name of God or the Holy Virgin in vain should as penance contribute a small coin to a box kept for the purpose. After a certain time, large sums having accumulated, Piero further suggested that six letters should be made, one for each quarter of the town, and that each porter should devote six days during the year to carrying the sick or those who had been victims of accidents to the hospitals, receiving for each journey a giulio. This origin of the Misericordia brotherhood has been, we are told, set aside by Passerini, the latest authority on the charitable institutions of Florence, who is of opinion that they are an offshoot of the Laudosi confraternity of Or-San-Michele, founded in 1292, who separated in 1326, during the pestilence caused in the city by the unburied corpses of those who fell at the battle of Altopascio.

In 1349 the plague again broke out in Florence, followed by the great plague of 1348, of which Boccaccio writes, when the sound of the brotherhood's measured tread about their work of removing the victims alone broke the silence of the stricken city. The Florentines made a gift of 35,000 golden florins to the confraternity in recognition of their heroism and devotion in burying the dead, taking charge of the orphans, and distributing food and clothes. Again in 1363 they proved their courage in behalf of the suffering during another outbreak of plague, and the large fortune of a Florentine usurer, Neri Boscoli, a banker of Naples of bad reputation, was bequeathed to them. The Misericordia had scruples as to accepting money procured by extortionate usury, and, having applied to the best theologians in Florence to decide this matter, accepted their decision, which was that their captains might receive the legacy; thus giving back to the poor what had been taken from them, after returning to those who could bring proof of exorbitant extortion the money that had been unjustly wrung from them.

Our author tells us that a century and a half before European cities instituted the registration of births, the Misericordia decreed that their notary should keep a book with the record of every child born within the city and of every person bap-

tized in San Giovanni. Till then the priests kept count of the number by dropping black beans in a box for males and white for females. The books of the confraternity were swept away, unfortunately, in the inundation of the Arno, in 1557.

Notwithstanding the great services this institution continued to render to the State, it got into difficulties through the intrigues of the Medici, who induced the Signory to fuse it with the confraternity of S. Maria del Bigallo, which was given sole power to manage the funds. This led to the treasure hitherto entirely dedicated to the uses of the poor being squandered in junketings and festivities, and the brotherhood of Pity ceased to exist for a time. The need of their services was soon very keenly felt in the city, and in 1480 it was decided to reconstitute the confraternity by a fresh code of statutes, which remain unchanged to this day. Seventy-two brothers were ordained to minister to the needy, bury the dead, attend to the sick, and practice other needful charitable work without remuneration. Their privileges seem limited to a small monthly stipend to any of their number fallen into poverty, and the right to be buried in the cemetery of the Misericordia with fifteen masses for the repose of their souls, secured by a small annual payment.

Another chapter on old Florence treats of two Florentine hospitals, that of the Innocent in the Via de' Servi, so well known through Andrea della Robbia's swaddled babies, which appeal to the public from Brunelleschi's graceful loggia, the asylum for illegitimate children built in 1421 under the auspices of the Guild of Silk Merchants in Por San Maria, and which continues to this day the good work of receiving these unfortunate infants, bringing them up and helping them to earn their living later on and serve their country. The other hospital is that of Santa Maria Nuova, built by Folco Portinari, the father of Dante's Beatrice, in 1288, a year before his death. It began with only twelve beds, but was enlarged in a very few years. Its history is remarkable, for it is said to have owed its origin to Monna Tessa, an old servant of the Portinari, who devoted her later years to nursing a few sick people in a small house belonging to her master, who built the hospital at her instigation. In later centuries, it was held in such good fame abroad that Leo X. sent his physician from Rome to study its management, and Henry VIII. of England, wishing to establish such an institution in London, requested of Francesco de' Portinari a copy of its rules and regulations, which, needless to say, are not in accordance with the present ideas on hygiene, for it was not till 1650, after various changes in the direction and proprietorship, that each patient had a separate bed. This hospital used to be much visited by travellers on account of the magnificent triptych by Van der Goes, now in the Uffizi Gallery, painted in 1470 for Tommaso Portinari, head of the Medici Bank at Bruges.

Those who are interested in the present conditions of land tenure and agriculture in Tuscany may turn with advantage to the articles on the Mezzeria, Oilmaking, and Vintaging. Mrs. Ross knows the Tuscan people well, having lived for many decades in the country outside Florence in great sympathy with the workers of the soil. The most attractive article of all in this

volume is on the popular songs of Tuscany, of which she has made a considerable collection, noting them down from the peasants in the country just as they are sung. Very different they are in form from the sophistications by the well-known composers, Gordiniani, Campani, etc. The illustrations of this instructive book are few and not up to the mark.

Modern Practical Electricity. By R. Mulineux Walmsley. Chicago: W. F. Keener & Co.

Appearances are against these four thin royal octavo volumes. They display a kind of ornateness by which the stern reviewer, lover of the leaden casket, refuses to be charmed. It is an ill omen, too, that the title-page bears no date and does not testify that this is a "second" edition, while the worn appearance of a good deal of the type does. Such lack of frankness creates a prejudice, and has caused the book to receive at our hands a more searching examination and comparison with other treatises than would ordinarily be bestowed upon a popular exposition of an established science. However, the final verdict is that an intelligent man of business or profession, who, by way of preparation for twentieth-century contingencies, would like, without too severe study, to understand the scientific basis of the wonderful inventions which have been revolutionizing life, and to learn as much as he easily can of the relation between practice and theory in electricity—so as, for example, to comprehend in some measure why one great company employs continuous current dynamos and others alternators—such a man cannot find a book better suited to his wants than this. That delight with which a work of genius like Maxwell's "Theory of Heat" thrills him who reads it is not to be looked for from these volumes, but our readers understand what is the sort of cultivation required for the conscious enjoyment of a fine talent well trained; and they will take pleasure in noting the deftness of Dr. Walmsley's expositions. Clearness of statement is a small part of it. There is an accomplishment by which one suggests the right idea at the right moment and in the right form, a finish of expository tactics, for which the science of electricity affords an interesting field. That art is Dr. Walmsley's; and in sinking those parts of the theory that need not perplex the reader, such as the displacement current, in so arranging the different sections of the book and governing their contents that each difficulty that is to follow shall find the reader in the precise state of preparation needed to meet it, he at one point forced us to exclaim: This is verily the high strategy of perspicuity! Yet it moves so smoothly that the reader will deem it a matter of course unless he goes to the trouble of comparing this work with others.

Extreme devotion to perspicuity has in one place had its inevitable disadvantage—namely, after explaining in considerable detail the arrangement and shape of the lines of force from a charged conductor placed near an uncharged one, and how those lines move when one of the conductors is moved about, until the reader fully possesses it, the author supposes a charge thrown over the uncharged conductor so as to connect it with the earth, and correctly

enough says that the ensuing motion of the ends of the lines of force, during this discharge, is an electric current. To have analyzed the phenomenon into two parts would have been a monstrous blunder of exposition. But the author abstains from pointing out that the so carefully described features of the lines of force, with their perpendicularity to and termination at the surfaces of conductors, refer exclusively to a state of equilibrium, and cannot be expected to persist when the lines move with luminal velocity. Doubtless his reason was that, if he did that, he would have to indicate how these features would necessarily be modified under rapid motion, which would bring complications mountains high. Yet, as he has left the passage, we will venture to predict that no small perplexity will be occasioned for the innocent who is at first led to believe that the displacements of the lines of force in moving an insulated conductor about in an electric field accurately represent an electric current.

The book is undoubtedly a second edition, but it must have been radically remodelled in some parts, for not only are all the latest discoveries treated, but early chapters present features for which there could have been no motive except to prepare the reader for a clear understanding of the new developments.

Indian Basketry: Studies in a Textile Art without Machinery. By Otis Tufton Mason, Curator Division of Ethnology, U. S. National Museum. Doubleday, Page & Co. Two volumes, quarto, with 212 text figures and 218 full-page illustrations.

These two volumes, profusely and exquisitely illustrated, are comparable with the best ever brought out by the ethnologic offices at Washington, and this is certainly saying a great deal. The colored illustrations are nearly all of rare beauty. The work is an ornament as well as a source of very elaborate information on a subject whose importance is very properly indicated by the author in his first chapter: "Basketry is the mother of all loom work and beadwork. . . . It is the alpha of an art in which billions of capital are invested, millions of human beings are employed, whose materials and products are transported to earth's remotest limits, whose textures are sought by every tribe of mankind. It is from this point of view that the present work is written."

Naturally, the overwhelming majority of the material illustrated and discussed is derived from North America, or, rather, from the United States. Mexico, Central America, and South America furnish but little, for the obvious reason that not much from these regions is accessible in this country, or anywhere else as yet. May the exhaustive work of Professor Mason animate collectors to fill up the vacancy. It is true, however, that this city harbors quite a respectable gathering of basketry from the Peruvian coast, which Professor Mason does not seem to have deemed worthy of attention, probably because it contains but a limited number of different shapes. Neither is there any reference to the Calchaqui of the Argentine Republic, or to the basketry of the Amazonian tribes. But so far as our own country is concerned, the work is so elaborate that it might be regarded as exhaustive.

Every kind of process is most minutely and accurately described, and, as often as possible, figured. Professor Mason has produced a model monograph.

While not by any means an appendix to Professor Mason's book, but an independent and equally elaborate discussion, also handsomely illustrated, we notice here the 'Basket Designs of the Indians of Northwestern California,' by A. L. Kroeber of the University of California, forming No. 4 of volume II. of the University Publications on American Archaeology and Ethnology. This conscientious and thorough study is a handsome addition to the literature of the subject.

Die Psalmen. Neu übersetzt und erklärt von Arnold B. Ehrlich. Berlin. 1905. 8vo., Pp. 438.

The author or commentator of this work lives in New York and writes English very well; he evidently thought that Bible students generally can read German, and that more of his books would be sold on the Continent of Europe than in England and America. As a Jew, and a thoroughly modern one, he does not, like many Christian divines, hunt in the Psalms for Messianic predictions; nor, like the Talmudic sages, for incidents in King David's life. Though he disclaims all sympathy with the "higher critics" in their efforts to fix late dates for the origin of Biblical books, and decries their habit of emendation whenever the Masoretic text offers difficulty, he is almost unwilling to place the composition of any Psalms earlier than the Maccabean age, and he "reads" something easy out of almost every outlandish word found in the Psalter. The headings of the Psalms, such as the third, which refer the composition to some event in David's life, he very properly rejects as unhistorical, and, moreover, as inappropriate. The musical terms, like "Lammasseah" ("to the chief musician" of the English Bible), he does not translate, but marks their places with asterisks.

The author's interpretation of the poems fits the times in which he places their composition. Thus, he points out that the sinners in Ps. I, 1, are habitual sinners (such is the grammatical meaning of *hattaim*), men who have given up the observance of the Mosaic law; and in the same verse he puts the sitting ("the Arabic *mejlin*") for the "seat" of the scornful, who are not jolly fellows in the tavern, but educated disbelievers, talking seriously of their disbelief. The *hallelim* of Psalm V. are to him *Griechler* (Hellenists), not fools, nor the arrogant; the Hebrew verbal root being coined from *Hellen*. Yet the materialism which the Psalmist combats is that of life rather than of the school; it is the hunt after wealth and pleasure.

Mr. Ehrlich is not satisfied with any vague, cloudy renderings; to him the poet always meant something definite. Thus, in dealing with that hard nut, Ps. IV., 4 (5 in the Hebrew), he turns it thus into German: *Gönt euch keine Ruhe, nur schlafet nicht! Zermartert euer Hirn auf eurem Lager, aber schweiget. Selu.*

—and says that the poet thus addresses the fretful hunters after gain: Go on with your fretting, only stop short of actual sin; let your business cares trouble you even in bed; but keep your low sentiments to yourselves. And in the closing verse, the poet

glories in his own freedom from cares and in his peaceful slumber; for he trusts himself to the Lord. But here, as elsewhere, the poet is not speaking in the first person, does not mean himself alone, but the whole patriotic class, party or sect for whom he speaks, and who are to sing his poems. In short, the Psalms are to Mr. Ehrlich a set of party campaign songs, as they are to most of the higher critics.

Our author finds a specific meaning also for the first half of the twenty-fourth psalm. It answers the problem of proselytes; any Gentile may "ascend the mount of the Lord" (enter the Temple yard as an Israelite) who is "clean of hands and pure of heart," etc., without assuming the yoke of the ceremonial law. In the second half of this psalm, which he considers a separate song, he falls into a grave anachronism. "The King of Glory, enters" in the form of the Ark of the Covenant on its return from battle. But as all the psalms were, in our author's opinion, written long after the Babylonian exile, when the Ark of the Covenant was only a dim recollection, the poet could not have harbored such a thought, nor would the singers and hearers have caught the implication. The King mentioned as "His Anointed" in the second psalm; and the King of the 45th and 110th, were for our author post-exilic high priests, wielding, with or without the title, the royal power.

In Psalm CL 1, the "expansion of his strength" is to our author not the sky, but the roof of the Temple; in parallelism to the first line, "Praise ye God in His Sanctuary." For this rendering of *ragia* he brings some strong but not convincing proofs from later Hebrew writings.

"Psalm CL 6 is commonly rendered: 'Every soul shall praise the Lord, Hallelujah.' (The new version makes it, 'Every breath, etc.'). The Hebrew *neshamah*, as denoting a living creature, says our author, is, in the Bible, always used in a contemptuous sense; hence the old rendering makes an anti-climax. But as the praise of the Lord is to be sung, and to be intoned on horns and flutes, it is only fitting to wind up: 'Jeder Atemzug sei ein Hallelujah!'

Our author shows, rather unjustly, but little faith in the authority of the Septuagint, for this version, if he is right as to the age of the psalms, was made so soon after their composition that the translators must have been in full touch with the poets. They certainly were in touch with Palestinian custom by denoting, in harmony with the Mishnah, the psalms for the days of the week.

Mr. Ehrlich, in his commentary, lays bare the ponderous apparatus with which he has done his work. There are the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Pesitto, the Talmud and the Midrashim, the medieval Jewish and modern Christian and "critical" commentators, to cull from; though very often he cuts loose from them all. He calls in the help of Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic; but never a word of Assyrian, now so popular among Bible students. He seems never to have looked into Assyrian grammar; for, in commenting upon *yeshuatah* in Psalm III., he claims that Hebrew shows two case endings only, the independent and dependent case; and in note (4) in the appendix of outlying erudition he tells his readers that Arabic also had only two cases, till, after the invention of the vowel points, three end-vow-